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Current Opinion

Greek in Present Theological Education

A live and interesting question for men engaged in the training of ministers is that of the practical value of the study of Greek in the theological course. The recent decline of Greek in many of the colleges leaves men to enter the theological seminary without Greek at all, or with an insufficient preparation in Greek. Also, the rapid increase of scientific study produces new subjects which students should pursue, and the demands upon the modern ministry for administrative work and practical efficiency require that some modifications in the kind of preparation should be made.

In view of these conditions, it was timely for Professor Samuel Dickey, in being inducted into the chair of New Testament Literature and Exegesis at McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, to discuss "The Position of Greek in the Theological Education of Today." He considers five possible ways of dealing with the present situation. Of these five the one which seems to him most desirable is: "The reorganization of the entire curriculum upon a group system, the making of both Hebrew and Greek largely, perhaps wholly, elective, and the preclusion of a student who enters with neither language from attempting to take both." That is to say, a part of the men who pursue a theological course will do so without any linguistic equipment and will therefore base their work entirely upon the English Bible; while those who have adequate linguistic equipment will have the opportunity, in a series of courses especially designed for them, to interpret the Bible on the basis of the original languages. The proportion of men pursuing these two diverse lines of study can only be estimated; but it seems likely that the majority, perhaps the large majority, of divinity students would soon be found in the English courses. It might therefore result that a comparatively small number of seminary graduates would be first-hand interpreters of the Bible, and of this number most would probably go on to become professional teachers of the Bible.

Professor Dickey does not wish to be understood as reducing the requirements for admission to the seminary, but rather as changing somewhat the requirements to include some of the newer fields of study, such as psychology and sociology. It is agreed on every hand that some modification of the curriculum of the theological seminaries is desirable, and it remains to be seen what modification is required to meet best the existing

conditions. The proposal which Professor Dickey makes will be read with interest by all who have this problem at heart, and his suggestion may be found to lead in the right direction.

He quotes with approval a recent editorial utterance of the *Outlook*:

Too long the standards of the divinity schools, at least in America, have been those of the teacher of theology rather than those of the active minister; too long theological professors have been teaching as if their dearest aim was to make students like themselves. While medical students have been studying not to be medical professors but physicians and surgeons, while law students have been studying to be, not professors of law, but lawyers, theological students have been studying as if they were all to be theological professors.

And in a similar vein Rev. A. A. Berle, D.D., writes:

At its best the divinity school of today is calculated to turn out a man whose natural next step is a fellowship for study in Germany, with a return to a theological professorship. At its worst—well, for its worst, the recent history of the failure of the churches to meet and lead the moral aspirations of the masses furnishes the indictment.

Dr. Sanday on the Life of Christ

Everything that comes from the pen of Professor William Sanday, of Oxford University, is of first importance for all New Testament students. While we are waiting for the appearance of his promised *Life of Christ*, we are from time to time helped by volumes which he produces as offshoots of his preparation for the great comprehensive work. The latest volume from him, which has just appeared, is entitled: *The Life of Christ in Recent Research*. It contains a group of lectures which he has recently given on various occasions. One of them deals with the "Symbolism of the Bible;" five of them discuss research in the life of Christ during the last twenty years; one is entitled "The Deity of Our Lord Jesus Christ as Expressed in the Gospels;" and then comes a chapter on "Miracles," to which this paragraph is intended to call attention.

It is a large-minded and helpful consideration of this perplexing subject. Dr. Sanday recognizes the importance of the problem. He says: "The great difficulty is *to make both ends meet*—on the one hand the presuppositions of science and on the other hand the presuppositions of religion; on the one hand the data of philosophy and on the other hand the data of history." The author thinks that the way may open to a satisfactory conclusion on this perplexing problem if we can establish a correct method of study regarding it. He would view the problem in the largest relations and bring to it the largest possible light. He does not ask that we divest ourselves of our modern knowledge and thought.

With regard to the miracles recorded in the gospels, he holds that the evidence is considerable in quantity, excellent in quality, and of a very restrained and trustworthy kind; that the gospels do not make too much of miracle, but are very careful to keep it in a subordinate place. Yet he recognizes that the gospels, good as their credentials are, stop short of evidence that is absolutely at first hand. We must recognize as historians the sincere and convinced belief of those who were actors in New Testament history; we cannot doubt that their whole attitude of mind toward these things which they saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears and did with their own hands was the attitude of men who believed themselves to be in contact with miracles.

The question therefore for us is: How are we to look at and describe to ourselves these phenomena of which the record has come down to us? He quotes with approval the saying of St. Augustine: "We say that all miracles (or prodigies, *portenta*) are contrary to nature; but they are not. For how can that be contrary to nature which takes place by the will of God, seeing that the will of the great Creator is the true nature of everything created? So miracle is not contrary to nature, but only to what we know of nature." In accordance with this statement, Dr. Sanday says: "Miracle is not really a breach of the order of nature; it is only an apparent breach of laws that we know, in obedience to other and higher laws that we do not know."

He desires that we should recognize the progress and changes of thought from period to period of human history, the various forms under which we conceive God's activities:

The broad conclusion to which we shall come is, I think, that the belief in miracle was relative to the age in which the miracles occurred, that it was an inevitable product of the culture and ideas of that age, that historically it served the purpose that it was intended to serve, but that it has come down to us with a different mental context, under different conditions, and so requires some corresponding modification of statement. There is nothing strange in all this. It is the way in which God has really ordered the successive ages of mankind, each with characteristics of its own, and each leading on to the next beyond.

There is this difference between our mode of thinking and that of the first century Christians, that our attention is fixed upon a different order of causation, and when miracles happen we call them by another name. There are many things especially in the region of spiritual experience, that might be called miracles, if we care to use the word. But nothing in modern experience can cancel the well attested facts of history. That miracles happened in the full conviction and belief of the early Christians, and with the full significance that they attached to miracles, is as certain as our own existence. The only question that is open

to discussion is the more exact analysis of the sense in which we at the present day are to describe them as miracles. But we too look back upon them primarily as events in the past. And therefore, for us too, this exact and scrupulous analysis of our own ideas is really of secondary importance. The first thing that we have to grasp is the place of miracle in the procession of the ages, as they are slowly unrolled in accordance with the mind and purpose of Almighty God.

Christ and Krishna

Among the unexpected conflicts of today's religious life is that between Christianity and Hinduism. Particularly is this conflict just now in evidence because of the considerable progress made by a type of thinking supposed to be born of the faith in Krishna. In the *Hibbert Journal* for October there are two essays dealing with this matter. That by Rev. N. Macnicol on "The Action and Reaction of Christianity and Hinduism in India" is from the point of view of the Christian Missionary; that by Maud Joynt, "The gospel of Krishna and of Christ" is that from the point of view of the follower of Krishna. The two articles are interesting in that they agree that there is interplay as well as similarity between the two religions. That of Mr. Macnicol, however, seems to be the more objective and scientific. That similarities exist between the two forms of religion has been noticed for centuries. Many of these similarities, however, are very possibly the outcome of the influence of Christianity upon Hinduism during the early centuries of our era. A fair account of the life of Krishna as a whole certainly will not bear comparison with a similarly complete picture of Jesus. But it was altogether inevitable that the method of interpretation to which both the New Testament and the Bhagavad Gita have been subjected should give results very largely determined by the predilections of those who compare the two types of religion. The sober treatment of Mr. Macnicol makes it evident that there is developing in India a form of Christianity that will not be exactly like that of the West, and at the same time, that there is developing a form of Hinduism which emphasizes those elements most similar to Christianity. Maud Joynt's argument is more specific and attempts to find in the Fourth Gospel and in the Logos doctrine in general that which is very similar to the teaching of the Hindu poems. In order to show this she redefines Nirvana in such a way as to make it practically identical with the "peace" of which Jesus speaks, and redefines *Maya* until it means not simply illusion, but complete liberation from control of the secondary good as distinct from the supreme good, the spirit of God. The teaching of Jesus that the kingdom of God is within you she argues is a call to awake from *Maya*. Eternal life in the sense in which she discovers it is thus identical with Nirvana. Natu-

rally she finds the truest expression of the Christian teaching in that of the mystics; and it cannot be denied that there is a striking similarity between the mystics of Hinduism and those of Christianity. It is a fair question, however, whether she has properly grasped the full force of Jesus' teaching about eternal life and whether she has not redefined terms of Hinduism in the interest of discovering similarities between it and Christianity. For our part, we are convinced that such a method can only bring confusion. No fair-minded scholar would attempt to deny the truth that lies in all religions, but for comparative purposes it is surely a mistake to read back the best from one religion into the terms of another. A comparison implies first of all impartial exegesis.

The Evolution of the Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments have been commented upon in many ways for many centuries, but Mr. Ernest Thompson Seton has his own way of treating them in a little book entitled *The Natural History of the Ten Commandments* (Scribners, 1907). Mr. Seton has come to the conclusion that "the Ten Commandments are not arbitrary laws given to man, but are fundamental laws of all highly developed animals." This is not a new idea exactly, but it has come to him with all the freshness of original discovery, and it may come to others with similar force. That the ethics of today have grown by a long process of development out of the elements of conduct which pertain to all life—animals and men—is one of the primary facts of the modern conception of evolution. The evolution of the Ten Commandments is one phase of the whole process of development. Now Mr. Seton is able to treat the subject very interestingly from the point of view of the animal world. Taking up one commandment after another, he shows how the fundamental principle involved in each is an unwritten law of conduct with the higher orders of animal life.